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Item 139 of the preliminary list*
Pattern of conferences

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to requests made pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/237 of 24 December 2012 and other relevant mandates on issues related to conference management, as well as on initiatives undertaken by the Secretariat to improve the quality of conference services provided to Member States. The detailed information on the paper-smart concept requested in section IV, paragraph 21, of the above resolution is the subject of a separate report (A/68/123). Statistical data are provided as supplementary information and can be accessed at the link below,[a] or on the website of the Committee on Conferences.[b]

[a] http://coc.dgacm.org/2013/Documents/2013_Supplementary_Information.pdf.
[b] http://coc.dgacm.org.

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I. Meetings management

A. Calendar of conferences and meetings

1. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985

1. Requests to meet during the main part of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly have been received from the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (see supplementary information,[1] sect. I). In accordance with established practice, the requests will be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences for recommendation to the General Assembly.

2. Draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2014-2015

2. The provisional calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields for 2014 and 2015 (E/2013/L.6) was reviewed by the Committee on Conferences on 2 July 2013, and its comments have been transmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its substantive session of 2013 (E/2013/93).

3. During its substantive session, in September 2013, the Committee on Conferences will review the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2014-2015 (A/AC.172/2013/L.2) and transmit its recommendations to the General Assembly in its report for 2013 (A/68/32, annexes I and II).

3. Intersessional departures for 2013

4. The Committee on Conferences approved a request from the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters to change the venue of its sixtieth session in June 2013 from New York to Geneva.

5. The Committee also approved a request from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to extend by three days its session in December 2013.

B. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

1. Analysis of meeting statistics of United Nations organs

6. Statistical data by body for the past three years on the utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies that met in New York, Geneva,

[1] See http://coc.dgacm.org/2013/Documents/2013_Supplementary_Information.pdf.

Vienna and Nairobi is contained in section II, table 1, of the supplementary information. Statistics relating to documents are presented separately in section VII of the supplementary information.

7. The utilization factor by duty station for the past three years is contained in section II, table 2, of the supplementary information. The overall utilization factor for meetings at all four duty stations in 2012 is 84 per cent, which is above the established benchmark of 80 per cent. There was a decrease of 1 percentage point from 85 per cent in 2011, mainly owing to a 3 per cent decrease in the utilization factor of the core sample of bodies in New York from 82 per cent in 2011 to 79 per cent in 2012. The percentage of cancelled meetings increased to 8 per cent in 2012 from 6 per cent in 2011, and the time lost as a result of late starts and early endings slightly increased to 16 per cent in 2012 compared to 15 per cent in 2011. However, the reassignment of cancelled meetings enabled the provision of interpretation services to accommodate a larger volume of requests from bodies entitled to meet on an "as required" basis (664 in 2012 as compared to 553 in 2011) as well as from regional groups (95 per cent in 2012 as compared to 92 per cent in 2011).

8. Both the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi recorded an increase in the utilization factor from 90 per cent in 2011 to 93 per cent in 2012 and from 89 per cent in 2011 to 92 per cent in 2012, respectively. The utilization factor for meetings held at the United Nations Office at Vienna remained at 89 per cent, the same in 2012 as in 2011.

9. In 2012, the utilization factor of the following three intergovernmental bodies in New York fell below the benchmark of 80 per cent for the previous three consecutive years (see supplementary information, sect. II, table 1.A): the Committee on Information, the Committee on Contributions and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund. As mandated by the General Assembly, the Chair of the Committee on Conferences will hold consultations with the bureaux and secretariats of those bodies and will report orally to the Committee at its substantive session. The Statistical Commission and the Commission for Social Development, which had previously not fully utilized their entitlement, improved in 2012, reaching 86 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively.

10. In 2012, there were no bodies in the core sample at the Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi duty stations whose utilization factor fell below the benchmark. At Geneva, the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which had previously not fully utilized its entitlement, made notable improvement in 2012, reaching a utilization factor of 84 per cent.

11. Pursuant to section II.A, paragraph 20, of General Assembly resolution 67/237 of 24 December 2012, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (hereinafter referred to as the Department) has continued to work closely with the secretariats and bureaux of the six intergovernmental bodies whose average utilization factor for the past 10 years had fallen below the benchmark of 80 per cent as at July 2012 (see sect. II, table 8, of the supplementary information provided in the context of the previous report on the pattern of conferences, A/67/127).[2] Following close cooperation and coordination with the Department, two of those bodies, based in New York, namely, the Statistical Commission and the

[2] http://dgacm.org/CoC/Report_of_the_SG_on_the_pattern_of_conferences_(A-67-127)_Supplementary_information.pdf.

Commission for Social Development, improved their utilization factor in 2012, as mentioned in paragraph 9 above. Since their average utilization factor for the past 10 years is still below the benchmark, they are listed in section II, table 9, of the supplementary information together with eight other intergovernmental bodies that fall into that category. Of the remaining eight intergovernmental bodies listed in table 9, the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a Geneva-based body, improved its utilization factor in 2012, as mentioned in paragraph 10 above, following close interaction and cooperation with the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva, although its average utilization factor over 10 years remains below the 80 per cent benchmark. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Commission on Population and Development have maintained a utilization factor above the benchmark for the past three years.

12. Section II, table 10, of the supplementary information gives detailed statistics on the five intergovernmental bodies whose average utilization factor for the past 10 years remains below the benchmark of 80 per cent, and for which no improvement is noted in 2012. The list includes the Committee on Information and the Committee on Contributions, whose utilization factor fell below 80 per cent for the past three consecutive years, as mentioned in paragraph 9 above. **Based on a thorough review of the pattern of meetings for the past 10 years of each of the five bodies, the Department has made specific suggestions to the substantive and technical secretariats of those bodies, urging them to base their requests for planned meetings on actual utilization so as to minimize cancellations, to notify the Department in a timely manner in case of cancellation and to make full use of the meeting times.**

13. Meetings services reports, providing statistical data on the utilization factor for the past three years, including suggestions for improvement whenever necessary, continue to be sent out to the presiding officers of the secretariats of intergovernmental bodies prior to the start of their scheduled sessions. The Secretariat actively seeks feedback in order to assist the bodies in improving their utilization factor.

14. The planning accuracy factor[3] at the four duty stations decreased by 2 per cent to 86 per cent in 2012 from 88 per cent in 2011 and 2010 (see supplementary information, sect. II, table 6). In New York, the planning accuracy factor decreased by 4 per cent to 79 per cent in 2012 from 83 per cent in 2011. Two factors have adversely affected the index, namely, an increase of 1 per cent in the ratio of meetings added to meetings programmed and an increase of 3 per cent in the ratio of cancelled to programmed meetings.

15. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, the planning accuracy factor remained at 96 per cent, as in 2010 and 2011. At the United Nations Office at Vienna, the planning accuracy factor decreased slightly to 98 per cent in 2012 from 99 per cent in 2011. At the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the planning accuracy factor increased to 100 per cent in 2012 from 93 per cent in 2011.

[3] Number of meetings actually held as a percentage of the number of planned meetings adjusted one week before the session.

16. Although the meetings ratio[4] in 2012 dropped to 87 per cent from 89 per cent in 2011 for the core sample of bodies meeting in New York (see supplementary information, sect. II, table 4), the overall ratio of all meetings held in New York increased to 89 per cent in 2012 from 88 per cent in 2011 (see supplementary information, sect. II, table 8).

17. Data on meetings programmed[5] and held at the four duty stations (including the core sample) are shown in section II, table 8, of the supplementary information. The percentage of meetings programmed compared with meetings held for all meetings with interpretation in New York increased to 98 per cent in 2012 from 95 per cent in 2011 (see supplementary information, sect. II, table 8). The significant decrease to 61 per cent in 2012 from 99 per cent in 2011 for meetings with interpretation experienced at the United Nations Office at Nairobi is attributed to the renovation of the meeting rooms between May and September 2012.

2. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

18. The number of requests accommodated for the provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required" in New York has sharply increased: 687 requested and 664 provided in 2012; 577 requested and 553 provided in 2011; and 392 requested and 370 provided in 2010. These statistics translate into a slight increase in the percentage of services provided (97 per cent in 2012 as compared to 96 per cent in 2011 and 94 per cent in 2010). Geneva maintained its 100 per cent record in the provision of interpretation services in 2012, as in 2010 and 2011 (see supplementary information, sect. III, table 2).

3. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

19. Section IV of the supplementary information provides a breakdown on the provision of conference services by regional and other major groupings of Member States at the four duty stations for 2012. In New York, 95 per cent of the requests were met in 2012 (92 per cent in 2011). In Geneva, 86 per cent of the requests were met in 2012 (89 per cent in 2011), in spite of the heavy demand for additional meetings mandated by the human rights treaty bodies. At the United Nations Offices at Vienna and Nairobi 100 per cent of the requests for meetings with and without interpretation were met in 2012.

4. Utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

20. In 2012, all meetings of Nairobi-based bodies were held in Nairobi, in conformity with the headquarters rule, including the twelfth special session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the quarterly Committees of Permanent Representatives to UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). In addition, the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi was able to accommodate the request for interpretation services for two extraordinary meetings of the Committees of Permanent Representatives to UNEP and UN-Habitat.

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[4] Number of meetings actually held as a percentage of a body's entitlement.

[5] Meetings confirmed in the weekly meetings programme as receiving services.

5. Utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

21. The General Assembly has repeatedly noted with concern the recurring underutilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and has called for special measures to increase its utilization. The Secretariat has taken note of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/67/523, paras. 6 and 7) and Assembly resolution 67/237, sect. II.A, paras. 14-17), and has undertaken several activities in response to the requests from the Assembly. In 2012, with its continuing marketing efforts, the conference centre at ECA hosted and serviced 4,354 meetings, which represented a decrease of only 8 per cent as compared to 2011, despite increasingly fierce competition from the hotels and other conference facilities in Addis Ababa.

22. The Department has communicated the concerns of Member States to the heads of entities of the United Nations system through CEB. In addition, the Executive Secretary of ECA has appealed to the United Nations country team to consider the conference centre at ECA as the first option for its meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops in Ethiopia. A similar plea will be made to the diplomatic community and development partners working in Ethiopia.

23. The Department facilitated the holding of the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine at ECA on 29 and 30 April 2013. In accordance with the proximity rule for servicing meetings away from their established headquarters in the most cost-effective manner, the meeting was serviced by a mixed team of United Nations Office at Nairobi staff, freelancers and local staff.

24. A comprehensive analysis and review of the pricing structure is being conducted taking into account all value added services, for example, high-quality printing and documentation services and event management software to be provided by the conference centre. The objective is to introduce competitive conference packages that simplify the logistics of organizing venues, accommodation and other pertinent needs and requirements of conference and meeting planners.

25. In addition, ECA is developing a proactive marketing strategy that is sustainable, adequately funded and innovative in order to address the declining utilization of the conference centre. The strategy takes into account the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the feasibility study and proposed marketing strategy on maximizing the utilization of the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, which was commissioned in 2008.

26. The marketing strategy comprises five key components:

(a) Working collaboratively with the Addis Ababa Bureau of Culture and Tourism and key stakeholders to promote Addis Ababa as a meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition hub, with a view to engaging in joint marketing activities and developing add-on airline, accommodation and recreational packages;

(b) Building and strengthening partnerships with conference and event organizers through participation in high-profile international conventions and exhibitions such as the Worldwide Exhibition for Incentive Travel, Meetings and Events and the International Congress and Convention Association;

(c) Engaging in innovative marketing efforts, including revamping the conference centre website, incorporating multiple languages and virtual tours, producing high-quality promotional materials in English, French and Arabic,

including e-mail marketing-automated e-mail systems to increase buying decisions from clients and to encourage repeat bookings, establishing a dedicated blog and embracing other social media marketing concepts;

(d) Expanding the outreach activities to target new markets where prospective conference users have been identified, for example, the growing public and private sectors in Ethiopia and their key trading partners in Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe;

(e) Focusing marketing efforts on attracting larger conferences that require more specialized services and logistical support in which the conference centre would have a competitive advantage in the Ethiopian market, including partnering with other conference centres for referrals.

27. The provision of quality services is critical to attracting and maintaining clients. To that end, the conference centre is continuously improving its facilities with the aim of being accredited as an international conference facility. Some of the ongoing projects include kitchen renovations, refurbishing of some of the meeting rooms, and the upgrading of interpretation booths.

C. Impact of the implementation of the capital master plan on meetings held at Headquarters

28. The Department regularly communicated with the administration of the capital master plan and with focal points in all critical areas on issues concerning the planning, scheduling and implementation of activities during the completion phases of the plan. In accordance with the restacking plan, staff have been relocated to the Secretariat Building and the Albano Building. While conference rooms are still operating in the North Lawn Building, newly renovated rooms are being reopened in the Conference Building. Since the end of May, the General Assembly Hall has been closed for the final phase of the plan. An updated chart showing the availability of conference rooms during the remaining phases of the capital master plan is contained in section V of the supplementary information.

II. Integrated global management

A. Status report

29. Key personnel changes in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the offices away from Headquarters have delayed the process of consultation to operationalize and codify the dual responsibility for conference management between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. There is recognition that technology makes it possible, and that financial constraints make it necessary, to define with precision the authority of the various players with regard to resource utilization, capacity planning and workload sharing. Since documents no longer need to be processed in situ for operational reasons, the four duty stations covered by section 2 of the regular budget are increasingly acting as one coherent, integrated whole, leveraging economies of scale and available

computer-assisted translation technologies to achieve consistently high-quality and timely output regardless of the geographic location of the requesting body or the workforce. These developments underline the urgency of clearly delineating lines of responsibility between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi for conference management policies, operations and resource utilization.

30. The Department's New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi duty stations cooperated in building the common technological platform for translation and related functions. However, in order to optimize the servicing of various meetings away from Headquarters and align working methods, policies and practices related to the servicing of meetings and the production of multilingual documentation, further progress must be made in integrated global management. The current business model of four separate production chains must be integrated into a coherent and complementary global operation at all four duty stations, including a global capacity for external translation. This goal requires strategic rethinking and the codification of the dual responsibility referred to above. The related changes will be discussed with all concerned at the four duty stations and in other Secretariat departments with a view to reporting results to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

31. The proximity rule is a shorthand for the cumulative efforts by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management duty stations to achieve the most efficient servicing package for meetings held away from their designated headquarters. It includes but is not limited to minimizing travel costs. For example, whenever possible, functions are combined through multitasking without negatively affecting the services. For some recurring meetings, reduced staffing has become the norm, and savings from those reductions have already been reported. In 2012, the savings accrued for host Governments and in the regular budget as a result of applying the proximity rule total about $800,000.

32. Staff members who have participated in jointly serviced meetings have recognized that they have very positive non-financial advantages, such as developing and strengthening a system-wide common approach to the servicing of meetings and the sharing of good practices (such as paper-smart meetings at UNEP) among colleagues and counterparts from various duty stations.

B. Performance measurement

33. In support of integrated global management initiatives, and in response to the recommendations of Member States, the Department has established common performance indicators for conference services in the four duty stations and now uses them in the gData global reporting warehouse. In accordance with the Umoja technology standards, the Department acquired and implemented the SAP BusinessObjects software for business intelligence and reporting needs of the gData system.

34. It is expected that the development of the gDoc global document management system will be completed in 2013 and its deployment in all the duty stations in the biennium 2014-2015. Application development is being conducted at the United

Nations Office at Geneva, with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management coordinating the project.

35. Another global project (gText) was launched in January 2013, with the aim of supporting the document production tasks by building a system that includes e-Referencing, global terminology and computer-assisted and machine-translation features. It is expected that gText will be implemented in the four duty stations in 2014-2015.

36. Upon the request of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Office of Human Resources Management reviewed the time and attendance Flextime system deployed in the Department since 2010. The objective of the review was to provide an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the system and to determine its continued use as the primary tool for recording and processing attendance and leave in the Department through an interface with the Integrated Management Information System. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management advised that the report concluded by recommending the continuation of the Flextime system in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management "as the primary tool for recording and processing subject to consideration and implementation of 25 recommendations contained therein".[6] The core findings of the report were that:

(a) The management of the Department was well within its delegated authority in introducing and implementing the system;

(b) The introduction of the system involved simply the transfer of a manual process to an electronic platform;

(c) The senior management of the Department and the various staff representatives had met their obligations with respect to holding consultations on the introduction of the system;

(d) The language staff were not exempt from observing established working hours.

37. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has implemented or will implement all of the recommendations addressed to it, while others are under consideration elsewhere in the Secretariat, especially the recommendation that the pilot phase of the system be expanded to include other departments and offices of the Secretariat in New York and elsewhere, on a voluntary basis.

C. Evaluation by Member States of the quality of conference services

38. The global e-survey, redesigned in 2012 to capture feedback from Member States across the four duty stations, employed common indicators of the satisfaction of the respondents. The survey was launched at the four duty stations through extensive outreach and focused promotional activities in a multilingual format in December 2012 and was made available until the end of February 2013. In addition to indicating the ratings of services currently provided, the survey solicited feedback on improving the quality of services provided. Comments and complaints are

[6] The report is available from the Secretariat upon request.

collected and distributed to the relevant offices. Lessons learned are analysed to address areas requiring improvement, as identified by Member States (see supplementary information, sect. VI).

39. The survey was accessed 9,418 times. Regrettably, the response rate remained low. A letter was sent in February 2013 by the Acting Head of the Department to permanent missions advising them of the availability of the survey online. Despite those efforts, only 173 responses were received at all the duty stations. An analysis of the responses showed that a majority of the respondents from New York, Geneva and Vienna rated professionalism and courtesy of meeting services assistants, as "excellent". The overall linguistic quality of translated documents was rated "excellent" by respondents from New York and Geneva. Respondents in New York rated the overall quality of conference services as "good". The majority of respondents in New York rated as "excellent" the work of the Secretaries of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly and the Committee on Conferences, as well as the work of their teams in supporting the Committees in their preparations for and during their sessions. Complaints were received from six delegations.

40. A new section of the survey related to the demand for e-services. Strong trends emerged in the area of circulation of statements. Ninety-two of the respondents submitted statements for the general debate electronically. Two thirds of the respondents preferred electronic, non-hard copy distribution of documents, while one third expressed a preference for hard copy in some cases and for electronic form in others. Eighty-three per cent of the respondents preferred to use their own personal devices in the meeting rooms.

41. In 2012, the Department held language-specific informational meetings with Member States on the quality of language services at Headquarters from 10 to 12 April and from 16 to 18 October; the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva conducted one informational meeting per language, from 30 May to 1 June (one half-day for each official language); the Conference Management Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna conducted one informational meeting in September; and the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi held an informational meeting in April.

42. A consolidated summary of the opinions expressed by delegations and the responses provided by the Secretariat during the language-specific informational meetings with Member States held from 16 to 18 October is posted on the Department's website[7] pursuant to a request of the General Assembly as a novel way of engaging Member States on language-related issues and addressing their concerns.

43. In addition to the survey, the Department maintains a database and will set up a suggestion box to capture ad hoc feedback on the quality of its services from Member States.

[7] www.un.org/depts/DGACM/.

III. Matters related to documentation and publications

A. Documents management

44. During the reporting cycle, further progress was achieved globally in the area of proactive document management. In 2012, the overall timely submission rate was 88 per cent at United Nations Headquarters (1,033 out of 1,168), 85 per cent at the United Nations Office at Geneva (1,545 out of 1,813), 60 per cent at the United Nations Office at Vienna (80 out of 134) and 5 per cent at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (1 out of 19). In 2012, the rate of author departments and offices meeting the 90 per cent timely submission benchmark[8] was 60 per cent (29 out of 48) at United Nations Headquarters, 43 per cent (3 out of 7) at Geneva and zero per cent at both Vienna (zero out of 3) and Nairobi (zero out of 1).

45. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management pays close attention and gives high priority to the documents of the Fifth Committee. For the main part of the Fifth Committee's deliberations during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, 44 out of 75 documents planned, or 59 per cent, were submitted in a timely manner. Twenty-two documents were issued as mandated, namely, six weeks before their consideration; 11 documents were issued at least four weeks, and 18 at least two weeks, before being considered. The remaining 26 documents were issued less than two weeks before the respective meeting because of a combination of late slotting and other reasons beyond the control of the Secretariat, their excessive length and late submission.

46. For its first resumed session in 2013, the Fifth Committee considered 13 documents, of which 10 were submitted for processing in a timely manner (77 per cent). One document was issued at least six weeks before the respective meeting; four documents were issued at least four weeks, and four documents at least two weeks, before the respective meetings. Even though the remaining four documents were issued less than two weeks before the respective meetings, they were processed in 22 days on average, much less than the standard four weeks, despite their considerable length.

47. For the second part of the resumed session in 2013, the Fifth Committee considered 51 documents, of which 48 were slotted and 3 were submitted without the required pre-notification. Out of 48 slotted manuscripts, 44 (92 per cent) were submitted by authors to the Department in a timely manner. Thirty-two documents (67 per cent) were issued by the Department at least six weeks before the respective meetings; five were issued at least four weeks and five two weeks before the meeting. Owing to their length, the remaining six documents were issued less than two weeks before the meeting.

48. In 2012, the Department processed on time 97 per cent of manuscripts submitted on time and within established word limits (797 out of 821). Twenty-four manuscripts did not meet the processing benchmark, owing mainly to the competing priorities during peak seasons. As a result, 72 per cent of all pre-session documents

[8] The overall timely submission rate is defined as the percentage of manuscripts submitted to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management by author departments and offices before or on the agreed-upon slotting date. The 90 per cent benchmark was established by the Secretary-General and is contained in his annual compacts with all Heads of Department and Office.

issued in New York met the mandated timely issuance benchmarks. The Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva reported timely processing of 55 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, for Secretariat and non-Secretariat reports, and the Conference Management Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna reported 44 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively, showing considerable improvement from 2011.

49. The Secretariat has posted on the sanctions committees' respective websites in the six official languages of the United Nations the lists of individuals and entities subject to Security Council sanctions in connection with Somalia/Eritrea, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Libya, Guinea-Bissau and the Security Council Committees established pursuant to resolutions 1718 (2006) [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] and 1737 (2006) [Iran, Islamic Republic of].

50. Furthermore, in accordance with paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2082 (2012) of 17 December 2012 and paragraph 17 of resolution 2083 (2012) of the same date, the narrative summaries of reasons for the listing of all individuals and entities on the Al-Qaida Sanctions List and the 1988 (2011) Sanctions List are made publicly accessible in the six official languages on the Security Council's website. In total, 290 summaries have been posted for the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and 135 for the 1988 (2011) Sanctions Committee, amounting to over 2,550 pages made available in the six official languages. Since the 2012 session of the Committee on Conferences, there has been a net decrease in the number of individuals and entities on the two above-mentioned lists. The lists remain active and names are continuously being added and removed.

B. Digitization of important older United Nations documents

51. The task of digitizing, processing and uploading to the Official Document System (ODS) of all important older United Nations documents, that is, parliamentary records of the Organization going back to 1946, is a continuing programme of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the Department of Public Information in collaboration with the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The processing is not only technical; metadata must be created for the documents.

52. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has completed the digitization of the General Assembly official records supplements of the first to forty-seventh sessions in English, French and Spanish, thus ensuring online access to the entire series. The Library at Geneva is completing the digitization of the same document series in Arabic, Chinese and Russian. In addition, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has completed the digitizing and uploading of the verbatim records of General Assembly plenary meetings from the first to the eighteenth, twenty-first, twenty-second, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth and twenty-ninth sessions, a total of 23 sessions. All other General Assembly parliamentary documents from the forty-second to forty-seventh sessions in English, French and Spanish have been digitized and are accessible on ODS. The Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva is digitizing additional official documents of the Conference on Disarmament, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Economic and Social

Council and the Commission on Human Rights in all available official languages. By early 2013, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library had digitized 257,000 documents (2,453,000 pages) and the Library at Geneva had digitized 83,000 documents (1,159,000 pages). All digitized parliamentary documents, including Security Council documents from 1946 to 1993, in all six official languages, are accessible online through ODS.

53. There remain an estimated 3.7 million important older documents to be digitized (representing about 20 per cent of an estimated 17 million older United Nations documents requiring to be digitized). At such rate of progress, the expected time frame for completing the digitization of important older documents in-house would be at least 20 years. According to the indicative estimate of the Department of Public Information, the project to process all of the remaining important documents issued prior to the creation of ODS (3.7 million) within five years would cost $9 million. The current inventory is not definitive, and document collections can also present unforeseen challenges in digitization.

54. The benefits of having a complete documentary record on ODS are clear: it would substantially enhance access to the United Nations parliamentary documentation, not only as a key resource for Member States and the Secretariat, but would also make it readily available to researchers, civil society and the general public, irrespective of location.

55. The Publishing Section at Headquarters possesses the expertise to digitize documents, including the scanning of bound volumes, which is a labour-intensive process. In May 2013, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library combined their resources to expand the digitizing programme in order to respond to the request of the General Assembly (resolution 67/237, sect. IV, paras. 23 and 24) to complete the task of uploading all important older documents onto the United Nations website in all six official languages. For that purpose, and in order to utilize the supernumerary capacity in the Publishing Section of the Department (see sect. C below), staff were assigned to scan such documents in preparation for their uploading.

C. Printing and distribution operations

56. The Department managed the transition from a hybrid (offset and digital) printing and binding operation to an entirely digital one, as outlined in annex I to the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 (A/66/6 (Sect. 2)). The current output of the Department's publishing operations is nearly 90 per cent less than in 2009, when over 300 million page impressions were produced. This reduction has enabled the Department to deploy leased digital printing equipment that is scalable, flexible and fully capable of meeting the current requirements of Member States for printed documents.

57. The leased digital equipment allowed printing services to be provided without interruption in the aftermath of storm Sandy, which, on 29 October 2012, resulted in extensive flooding of the publishing operations located on the third basement level of the North Lawn Building. The printing, binding and related equipment was damaged beyond repair and all the offices were rendered inaccessible. Under the lease contract, new digital printing equipment was made available at no cost to the

Organization. Those new machines were relocated so that printing and distribution services could be resumed within days.

IV. Matters related to translation and interpretation

58. Negotiations between organizations of the United Nations system and the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management, were conducted in 2011. They resulted in an agreement that came into force on 1 July 2012. The negotiations with the International Association of Conference Translators (AITC), chaired by the Coordinator of the Language Services of the World Health Organization, were conducted in 2012. They resulted in an agreement that entered into force on 1 January 2013. Both agreements are valid for five years and align the remuneration of short-term interpreters and translators with that of regular staff. Existing mechanisms, such as post adjustment multipliers and the United Nations official rate of exchange, are used to enhance predictability, transparency and ease of administration in all duty stations. Off-site translation is now formally regulated in the agreement with AITC as a practical, mutually beneficial processing method allowing the production of high-quality translations. Off-site translators are provided with the same terminological and reference tools as the in situ staff.

59. Following the review of the United Nations language competitive examinations in 2010, the Department and the Examinations and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management agreed on a number of measures, including an 18-month rolling examination schedule, which have helped to meet the needs of individual language occupational groups for timely examinations in order to address both retirements and unpredictable separations.

60. As a matter of policy, the Department continues to comply with the principle of equal treatment of the six official languages. Encouraging language staff to continue to enhance their professional skills through targeted learning, together with a proactive outreach programme, remain the main succession-planning tools. In the period 2012/13, the programme continued to focus on the skill gaps identified by staff members themselves in consultation with their supervisors during their performance reviews. The external studies programme, coordinated for all four duty stations from New York, has become an effective component of integrated global management. Wherever possible, such external studies are combined with pedagogical assistance and other outreach activities at partner universities. This "competency-sharing" approach has proved to be a cost-effective way to achieve both training and outreach goals.

61. The Department continued and enhanced its collaboration with academic institutions within the framework of the outreach to universities programme. The third conference of universities that have signed memorandums of understanding with the United Nations, hosted in China by the Shanghai International Studies University in April 2013, provided an opportunity for all participants to further refine their common strategies in the training of language professionals. In support of greater cost-effectiveness of training, conference participants agreed to leverage more actively remote learning tools and exchanged good practices with leading international specialists in the field. The next conference will take place in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, in 2015.

62. The Department continued to facilitate the establishment and improvement of training programmes for interpreters and translators in Africa. For that purpose, the "African project" on the training of translators, conference interpreters and public service interpreters was initiated, aimed at creating a network of centres of excellence in Africa. The centres offer common master's degree programmes for the postgraduate training of language specialists, structured along the models of existing successful programmes. Following the first Pan-African Conference on the Training of Translators, Conference Interpreters and Public Service Interpreters, held in February 2009 in Nairobi in connection with the African project, master's degree pilot programmes were established at universities in Nairobi and Maputo, with pedagogical and technical assistance from the United Nations, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The staff of the United Nations Office at Nairobi offer approximately eight hours of translation and interpretation training a week to students of the University of Nairobi. The African project is coordinated by the Division of Conference Services at Nairobi; the University of Nairobi serves as a link between the Department's memorandum of understanding network and the African project.

63. The second Pan-African Conference on the Training of Translators, Conference Interpreters and Public Service Interpreters was held in Addis Ababa in May 2012. The participants discussed the role of trained language specialists in the promotion of multilingualism and their contribution to development efforts and conflict resolution on the continent; the importance of languages in developing countries for development, peace and stability; the challenges inherent in establishing a network of universities offering conference interpretation and translation training and the implementation of master's degree programmes in interpretation and translation; and the identification of reliable sources of funding for the development and sustainability of the African project.

64. Important recent developments in the process have been the adoption of a curriculum for interpretation and translation by the Pan African University, and the decision by a group of universities to constitute a network of centres of excellence in the five African regions for training young Africans as interpreters and translators. The Department continues to seek universities in Africa that would qualify for pedagogical assistance in training language professionals and that would benefit from such assistance.

65. The language internship programme in 2012 hosted 90 interns (New York Headquarters, 43; United Nations Office at Geneva, 32; United Nations Office at Vienna, 5; and United Nations Office at Nairobi, 10), and the United Nations Office at Vienna continued its traineeship programme with a total of 10 trainees given placements in the form of on-site retainer contracts. In 2012, language staff of the Department made about 45 visits to universities that had signed memorandums of understanding, mostly in conjunction with their own external studies or home leave, in order to meet with faculty and provide training to students, devoting a total of 213 person-days of pedagogical assistance to universities. At least 30 applicants have passed a language competitive examination since 2007 after benefiting from a language internship or traineeship, and about 110 former interns and trainees who passed a freelance test are now eligible for recruitment on temporary appointments.